

SPRIT OF THE PRESS.

Editorial Opinions of the Leading Journals Upon Current Topics, Compiled Every Day for the Evening Telegraph.

THE POLITICAL SITUATION IN FRANCE.

From the N. Y. Herald.

A cable dispatch from London more than indicates that the reforms granted by the Emperor are winning their way into popular favor. The fuller account of which we are now in possession does not induce us to depart from the judgment we pronounced on Wednesday. The Emperor does not mean that power shall depart from his hands.

As we have said already, the *Senatus Consultum* embodies reforms which show that the Emperor has set before him the British constitution as his model. The Corps Legislatif and the Senate are no longer to be puppets. They are to have the right and privilege of initiative. The same power is accorded to the Senate. Each assembly is to be complete in itself. It will henceforth be competent to the Corps Legislatif or to the Senate to introduce new measures. But the Emperor is to be no mere figurehead. He is willing to rule with the assistance of ministers. The ministers, however, are to be under his control. They are to be responsible for their own acts, but they are to deliberate in council under his presidency. When ministers shall happen to run counter to popular feeling, and when impeachment becomes necessary, they can be impeached only by the Senate. One other peculiarity deserves to be mentioned: ministers may be members of either house of the Legislature, but it is to be a special privilege of ministers to defend or prosecute their measures in either house as occasion may require. What, then, do these reforms amount to? Autonomy is granted to each of the two branches of the Legislature. It will be competent to each to institute any measure. The decisions of the lower house will be subject to the revision of the upper. It will be necessary, on the other hand, for any measure introduced and carried to the upper house to obtain the sanction of the lower. In all matters the Government, before taking final action, reserves to itself the right to refer difficult questions to the decision of a committee. The Emperor will be his own Prime Minister, and will, of course, preside over the council of ministers.

It is not to be denied that in all this we can discover a certain amount of substantial reform. But it is just as evident that the Emperor, in granting those reforms, has been careful to make such provisions that the government machine, though it will be a little more complex than of old, will be entirely under his control. The Emperor knows France better, perhaps, than any man now living, and all the caution he is now manifestly exercising may be necessary; but we cannot say we admire the wisdom which has revealed in the peculiar checks to the popular power that are embodied in the new constitution. It is certainly a mighty step in an onward and upward direction. Within certain limits France is to be allowed to govern herself. The members of the French Legislature, formerly allowed only to speak are now invested with real power. Formerly they could only question the government; henceforward they will have the right to introduce measures of reform. This is something gained. We may look forward with confidence to lively times. We know what Frenchmen are when they are allowed to speak out. They have been so long kept in silence that much requires to be said. It is so long since a French Parliament of its own accord made laws, or in any way introduced reforms, that we may calculate almost with certainty on having legislation in earnest. We do not exaggerate when we say that the first session of the new French Parliament will be the liveliest that we have had occasion to chronicle in many long years. We can see reform projects innumerable. We can see collisions between the two branches of the Legislature. We can see both branches in collision with the executive. We can see Napoleon dissolving the chambers and appealing to the people. We cannot say we see beyond; for it is just as possible that the people may go against the Emperor as that they will go with him.

It is gratifying to be able to write that the press generally takes a favorable and hopeful view of the course pursued by the Emperor. The general opinion is that he has yielded with a good deal of grace, and that if he has stooped under the violence of popular demands, he has so stooped that he remains still master of the situation. The difficulty of the situation, in our judgment, consists in the fact that Napoleon has yielded. It is not impossible that concession may lead to the crowning of the edifice; but neither is it impossible that concession may lead to abdication or worse. Napoleon, by his skillful use of the army, has for many long years kept France at bay. The French people, in the first time since 1815, have felt their power. Will they use it in their own interest or in the interest of their master? New found power is always dangerous. We have no good reason to say that it will not prove dangerous to the dynasty of Napoleon. One thing we will say: the form of government now recommended cannot be final; it is a very imperfect copy of the original. It is at best but a tentative process, and its success is doubtful. It is one of the live questions of the day, which every passing hour will help to solve. Meanwhile, Napoleon and his reforms are likely to command quite as deep and as general interest as Pius IX and his council of bishops. The world moves on in spite of Popes and Emperors.

OLD VIRGINIA.

From the N. Y. Tribune.

"Time was, when the brains were out, the man would die," and when an election was over, the majority took the reins and the minority subsided, and that was the end of it. The late Virginia election seems to have been conducted under other auspices. Though there is no uncertainty or dispute as to the result, the disposition to argue and dispute seems nowise abated; and the belligerents on both sides favor the *Tribune* with frequent iterations of their grievances. The subject grows threadbare; yet we printed yesterday in juxtaposition a bulletin from either side, and solicited for both the earnest attention of the public. The writers are men of ability and character, and their statements of facts may be relied on.

Let us deal first with that of Mr. Kelley (whom we recognize as an ex-editor, delegate elect to the new Legislature, and, as he says, a most determined "Rebel"); and let us look in vain for proof of his assertion that the North, or the Republicans thereof, are intent on keeping Virginia out of the Union. The press of this city may be fairly presumed to represent every considerable phase of Republican sentiment, yet not one of our daily journals has even suggested that the election of Walker & Co. should be overruled by Congress or any other power. And we know of no influential Republican demonstration in favor of any such course. We all assume that Virginia is to resume her place in the councils of the re-

public on the terms prescribed by Congress a few months ago. General Canby's indication of a purpose to impose the "iron-clad" oath on the newly chosen Legislature was never prompted by the Northern Republicans, and is generally regretted by them. Of all who have discussed it, at least nine-tenths have regarded it with disfavor. Mr. Kelley, therefore, fights a phantom of his own creation. Let us recall attention to the order of events.

1. The people of Virginia were invited by Federal authority to hold a Constitutional Convention and reconstruct their State through its action.

2. The conservatives (ex-Rebels) attempted to carry that convention on the basis of no political rights for colored men, made a desperate struggle, and were badly beaten.

3. The Republicans (mainly colored) carried two-thirds of the convention, and made therein a thoroughly national Constitution, wherein the equal rights of the colored men were guaranteed in the strongest manner. If this constitution does not secure those rights, we see not how any one could.

4. The convention further proceeded to disfranchise and exclude from office all those who had taken a conspicuous part in the late Rebellion.

5. General Grant, on the appeal of the conservatives, submitted these disfranchising clauses to separate votes from the residue of the Constitution. And, in the election just held, the conservatives, acting with a minority of the Republicans, have voted down the prospective clauses by a very large majority, and have chosen their State officers and Legislature, while the residue of the Constitution is ratified by an enormous unanimous vote.

Now, then, it seems to us that the majority has done right in every case, right in voting down the conservatives when they undertook to proscriber the blacks; right in voting down that larger section of the Republicans who attempted to proscriber a large portion of the whites. And we propose that the majority shall rule. We protest against the election of the test oath as mediated by General Canby; we want the leading conservatives to take their seats in the new Legislature, and swear fidelity to the new Constitution, and ratify the fifteenth amendment; and we want the State admitted thereupon to representation in Congress and to all the rights of self-government. And so we are confident, do a very large majority of the Northern people. Then what is Mr. Kelley grumbling at? And why does he talk of the Federal Government spending four hundred millions per annum, when, apart from the payments of debt, its entire outgoes are not a third of that sum? If he is coming back into the Union, why not talk as though he belonged here?

As to our Radical correspondent, we can't help telling him that we think those who concocted and put through the prospective clauses just voted down are fairly responsible for much of the bitterness evinced by the late Rebels whosoever of the conspiracy. Suppose he owned a thousand acres of land, and forty black men, living thereon and dependent on him for employment, shelter, and food, were to vote that he should nevermore vote or hold office, perhaps he would like it, and then again perhaps he wouldn't. And if he didn't, he might somehow evince his displeasure. It is the foolish attempt to disfranchise opponents that has divided and temporarily prostrated the Republicans of Virginia, and they are blind bats if they don't see it and govern themselves accordingly. And, if they do, they will soon recover their lost ascendancy. They will not hope to rule at the expense of fundamental Republican principle.

We believe we have now given all the space we need to the late Virginia election. "Let us have peace."

THE VIRGINIA SITUATION.

From the N. Y. World.

The Democracy fairly and triumphantly carried the Old Dominion. That some white Republicans and negroes were sensible enough to vote with them, and that the conservative party even went so far as to pick a portion of their candidates from the ranks of these voluntary allies, does not alter the distinctive character of the victory, but merely magnifies the extent of it. Neither does the fact that the fight was won under the laws of Congress, and in accordance with such a policy as accepted the situation only to mitigate and master it, diminish the emphasis of the success or detract from its real Democratic significance. Virginia belongs, in the administration of government and in the moulding of her future, to her own true people who have wrought good out of evil and saved the Commonwealth by their energy and intelligent sense.

Hence, the open letter addressed by Dr. Gilmer to the so-called leader of a defeated negro faction in that State is mainly and to the point. This latter person—Jenkins is the name of him, if we mistake not—coolly proposed that his beaten crowd of disunionists should form an alliance with the chivalric and victorious conservatives of the grand old State. Dr. Gilmer's reply is immaterial to the point, but the purport is that the conservative Democracy always leave their lath-string on the outside of the door, and that all who will enter the tabernacle of the redeemed if they come with clean hands and a pure heart, doing works meet for repentance. Whereupon the administration papers—notably the *Tribune*, *Times*, and *Springfield Republican*—lecture the conservatives on their dissembling and inhospitable spirit, forsooth! And this from the party that has called the Democracy dead for ten years and our principles defunct: this from the organization which drove the late Mr. Raymond and others who survive him out of place, power, and recognition because once they inclined to even a policy of toleration towards the conservatives—this is the humble pie of "join with us" which they offer before the Virginia Democrats, and this is the howl of horror they raise at the rejection of their offered fusion with an organization at which even to squint, except with the strabismic helplessness of a Butler, has had political and personal infamy for the penalty of it.

A FINE OPENING FOR GRANT.

From the N. Y. World.

Here is an excellent opening for Mr. Grant. A nigger by the name of Tol Page—we beg pardon, a gentleman of color, the Hon. Taliaferro Page—doorkeeper of the reconstructed Senate of the State of Alabama, was some time since arrested for the unlawful conversion to his own use of a pair of shoes. This brought Mr. Page into unpleasant relations with justice, but the justice being reconstructed justice, and Mr. P., in the course of oaths like pie, the upshot was that he went unlikewise back to his post in the Senate chamber, and there, by the piebald body infesting that apartment, was voted a vote of confidence and thanks. What time and how the stolen shoes creaked in a joyful break-down at the reception of this virtuous testimonial does not appear; but soon thereafter it seems that Mr. Page was yet a second time brought into relations with justice, and this time even reconstructed justice—the judge being a sealawg of the pure blood, and the jury five negroes to seven whites—found him guilty of perjury and thereupon decreed him, on the 25th of the month last past, a term of five years' imprisonment in the Alabama Penitentiary.

It is suggested that here is a fine opening for Mr. Grant. Let that eminent personage retreat from the reconstructed Governor of Alabama the pardon of the Hon. Taliaferro Page, and forthwith send that worthy gentleman on a foreign mission. True, the name of this same Mr. Page is now before the department as a fit and worthy person to be United States mail agent in Alabama, but why trammel so eminent a genius with the care of mail-bags of leather? He has already had transactions in that material, and they have not turned out as pleasantly for him as they might. Give him a mission, Mr. Grant. He is a fit fellow to your Siskies in Spain.

They can hold the Congress and the President to the fulfillment of pledges made, conditioned on exactions complied with, or can hold them up to disgrace and defeat on every political field where the radicals may venture with the record of Virginia cheated, written against them.

As to Canby and his dodges, Butler and his letters, Congress and its legislation, the President and the party proposed in his behalf, they are not to be feared, or sought to be flanked. Virginia *must* belong to herself. She has complied with every condition which radicalism imposed. Having wisely stooped to conquer, she may now raise her head in triumph. Continued exclusion from the Union, negation of the verdict and the will of her citizens, the continuance of military rule, will work out for her (if the administration dare any of these things) a far more exceeding weight of victory before the tribunal of the people now in judgment upon her persecutors and despoilers.

Virginia holds the citadel of Democratic victory under every process of Congressional reconstruction. Her Southern sisters have thanked God for her example, and have taken the courage wherewith to repeat it when their time comes. And if adoption of radicalism be the alternative of continued disunion by act of Congress, it will be Virginia's conservative invincibility which will extort such an admission from the administration—an admission which will drive them from power in every section where it is plainly proclaimed.

THE CONFLICT BETWEEN LORDS AND COMMONS.

From the N. Y. Times.

We are now in possession of the full details of the struggle over the Irish Church bill which brought about a temporary political deadlock, and threatened at one time result in a serious constitutional crisis. And although the telegraphic despatches received from time to time during the eventful three days' conflict embodied accurate accounts of the proceedings in Parliament, and gave a sufficiently correct impression of the main points of the situation, it is only on the arrival of the detailed accounts by mail that we can now form a clearer idea of the actual importance of the affair, and of the motives which actuated the peers in rushing so hastily into a conflict in which ultimate victory was manifestly unobtainable, and in which they had to retreat with such precipitation. In commenting upon the accounts received by telegraph at the time, we attributed the audacity of the Tory peers to the unexpected reinforcements which they had received from the ranks of the old Whig aristocracy and from quondam Liberal leaders like Lords Russell and Grey, in consequence of which they flattered themselves that, in the event of a serious collision between the two houses, they would not at all events have to take the entire risk upon their own shoulders. And we were clearly correct in the supposition. As long as it was merely a matter of the majority of the House, all avowed Tories that were ready to obey the behests of Lords Derby, Cairns, and Salisbury, those leaders felt the danger of committing their House to an unequal struggle with the Commons on their own responsibility. But with an accession to their forces from the Liberal side, they cast aside all the prudence that had previously marked their actions, and in the one short evening's debate, after which they proceeded to so decisive a vote, all their pent-up detestation of the measure of justice before them, and all their rancorous personal hatred of Mr. Gladstone, found full expression in the bitter and insulting taunts of Lords Grey and Salisbury, and the uproarious cheering with which they were greeted. The Premier's comparison of the Lords to people who vieved events from a balloon at too great a height for them to know or care much about them, had evidently goaded them into a reckless desire to assert their power at whatever cost, and spite the obvious leaders of the Commons. But with the morrow comes the reaction—the more timid Tories became alarmed—the Cabinet was united, and the Liberal majority in the Commons was firm—and before their Lordships met again the famous terms of honorable surrender had been privately negotiated.

But although the crisis itself was of so short duration and unproductive on first sight of violent political convulsions, its effects are likely to be permanent and far-reaching. During their brief moment of delirious triumph the Tory Lords betrayed their contempt for the popular will, and their personal dislike of the great Liberal statesman of the day, and an inordinate desire to preserve their own and kindred privileges intact. The country well knows the real temper of one branch of its Legislature with regard to matters in which the deepest interests are at stake. The House of Commons has now learned the necessity and the advantage of insisting upon and guarding its rights. Despite the amenities finally exchanged between all parties concerned, the events we have been considering cannot fail, it is supposed, to have a lasting effect upon the political future of Great Britain.

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